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NAME OF AUTHOR: Irene Oi Lin Kwan

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# CONFLICT RESOLUTION
# IN ROOMMATE OR MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS
# OF YOUNG ADULT WOMEN

BY

IRENE OI LIN KWAN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN ROOMMATE OR MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS OF YOUNG ADULT WOMEN submitted by Irene Oi Lin Kwan in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Counseling Psychology.

DEDICATION

*TO MY PARENTS*

## ABSTRACT

Conflict is inevitable in every intimate relationship. How conflict is handled has tremendous impact on the relationship and the people involved. This study examines the consistency of women's behavior in resolving interpersonal conflicts and addresses the question of whether style of conflict resolution is influenced by the cohesion level of a relationship.

Seventy-six young adult women, classified into two groups according to their marital or roommate relationships, were asked to complete three questionnaires: the Relationship Inventory, the Conflict Resolution Inventory, and the Personal Information Sheet. The Relationship Inventory yields two scores for cohesion, actual and ideal. In the Conflict Resolution Inventory, subjects described three different conflicts relating to money, personal habits, and household chores that they had with their marital partner or same sex roommate and their methods of resolving those conflicts. Seven styles of conflict resolution were suggested and the subjects rated the extent to which each of the seven styles characterized their actual way of handling conflicts. Consistency in their styles of conflict resolution was explored and comparisons between the two groups of people were made.

Results indicated that the subject of conflict did not affect the strategies that people used to resolve conflicts and certain styles were preferred over others. A slight difference in styles of conflict resolution was observed between the married and the roommate groups. Regarding the relationship between style of conflict resolution and cohesion level, no significant result was obtained. Neither actual nor ideal level of cohesion in a relationship influenced how people handled conflicts. More research is encouraged to study conflict-resolution behavior in other types of interpersonal relationships and to further explore the relationship between cohesion and methods for resolving conflicts.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Human relationships play a very important role in the growth and development of a person. People satisfy their needs through their relations with others (Mamali & Paun, 1986). Although the significant others may change as a person steps into different phases of life, relationships continue to have tremendous impact on the individual. Interpersonal relationships provide not only the fulfillment of social and emotional needs but also help to establish identities in people. People typically find their identities through their relationships with others. They may be a part of some relationships without any choice, such as those they were born into. Later, most humans actively develop relationships throughout their life spans. The evolution of a person's self or identity is, indeed, inseparable from the relationships which have been created with other people.

Not every relationship is precious or significant to an individual, however. The importance of relationships and the impact of these relationships on people vary according to such factors as the degree of bonding and commitment of the people involved. Bonding refers to extent of attachment or emotional tie between the individuals in a relationship (Moshman, Glover & Bruning, 1987). This degree of connectedness partly influences the individuals' expectations of each other and their way of handling the relationship. An extreme degree of connectedness, either too attached or too autonomous, does not imply a healthy commitment (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983). Too much dependence and attached behavior are considered problematic because a high cohesion level leads to overidentification and prevents individuation of the members involved (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983). A very low level of bonding, however, encourages autonomy with limited attachment or commitment

(Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983). It would seem then that neither enmeshed nor disengaged levels of cohesion would characterize a healthy and satisfying relationship; rather, a moderate level of cohesion seems preferable for the optimal functioning of a relationship from which members experience interdependence.

Interpersonal relationships not only can provide intimacy, warmth and nurturance but are often accompanied by frustrations, disappointments and conflicts. The fact that everyone is unique and has a different background, experience and temperament makes conflict an inevitable aspect of life. Conflict within a relationship is not necessarily destructive (Deutsch, 1971). It may deepen understanding between people and sharpen interpersonal skills and, as a result, a relationship may grow and attain a greater degree of intimacy because of nondestructive conflict.

Nevertheless, the negative consequences of conflicts appear to outweigh the positive ones. Unpleasant emotional reactions persist even though a conflict may have been resolved. Feeling alienated, experiencing lowered self esteem and becoming oversensitive are some of the common, negative outcomes. Conflicts may also result in possible violence, or even breaking-up of the relationship. Families and people living together, particularly, have to endure conflicts. Although people experience conflicts in various kinds of relationships or situations, conflicts occurring in a living situation where frequent and direct interactions take place seem to be unavoidable and intense. With the changing roles of men and women, decreasing commitment in relationships and the emphasis on the pursuit of self development, conflicts even lead to the break up of relationships in many cases. Therefore, the understanding of how individuals handle or resolve conflicts is critical to the understanding of humans and their relationships.

In spite of and because of negative experiences in past relationships, young adults seem to continue to engage themselves in relationships which demand a great deal

of emotional energy and commitment. The search for intimacy is especially notable in early adulthood. McAdams (1984) describes this strong drive to form relationships as the "intimacy motive", referring to the "preference for close, warm, communicative exchange with another" (p.166). Efforts to achieve intimacy can be seen in the developing of friendships and the making of long-term commitments regarding marriage and family. Casual acquaintance can no longer fulfill the needs for intimacy and companionship, which are nurtured by strong commitments (Newman & Newman, 1983).

Living in close relationships may not be totally satisfying. The trend of an increasing divorce rate in the past three decades (Statistics Canada, 1985) perhaps signifies the breakdown of the institution of marriage. Family violence and even suicide have become serious concerns of health professionals, social workers and educators. These phenomena are partly the effects of broken relationships or a lack of quality relationships. No intimate relationship can be free of conflicts. The key is, therefore, to learn to handle conflicts in such a way that the relationship would not be jeopardized.

The present research study has the goal of adding to the understanding of ways in which individuals deal with conflict. Within that goal are two purposes. First, the study attempts to examine the consistency of conflict-resolution behavior. Whether or not the subject issue of conflict determines the resolution methods is explored. Issues relating to money, personal habits and household chores are believed to be conflict-provoking in everyday life situations and, thus, chosen to be examined. In addition, people in two different types of relationships, marital relationships and same sex roommate relationships, are compared with regard to the methods used to resolve conflicts. Individuals involved in these relationships were selected because people in relationships where they live together on a daily basis and where there is a potential for

having equal status in the relationship are believed to have regular and frequent interactions, and thus a higher probability for conflicts.

The second purpose of the study is to explore whether or not style of conflict resolution is related to the cohesion level of relationships. Two aspects of cohesion, the degree of connectedness existing in a relationship and the amount of closeness people desire in their relationship, are scrutinized in relation to the methods of resolving conflicts.

In order to increase the understanding of conflict-resolution behavior and achieve the purposes of the present study, two hypotheses evolving from the review of literature are formulated. First, it is hypothesized that the subject issue of conflict would have no effect on the method which people use to resolve conflicts. Second, it is hypothesized that certain styles of conflict resolution are preferred over others. Besides these two hypotheses, three research questions are raised. The first one concerns the comparison of conflict-resolution styles between people in marital relationships and those in roommate relationships. The second and third questions deal with an exploration of the relationship between style of conflict resolution and the two aspects of cohesion.

The current study is organized in the following manner. This first chapter introduces the rationale, as well as the hypotheses of the study. In Chapter 2 relevant theories and research regarding early adult development, interpersonal relationship and conflict resolution are reviewed. In Chapter 3 the design and methodology of the empirical study are described. Limitations and delimitations are specified. The data collected from the survey are analyzed and the results are presented and interpreted in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, conclusions of the study are made and implications for future research are suggested.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Human development involves a great deal of systematic changes (Lerner & Hultsch, 1983). Theorists like Freud, Erikson, Piaget and Kohlberg conceptualize the development of human beings as a sequence of qualitatively different life stages (Lerner & Hultsch, 1983; Mallmann, 1986). Not all theorists, however, agree that there are "stages" of development. The learning theorists, in particular, see development as a gradual process which does not constitute stages (Craig, 1980). Although a consensus is lacking, the fact that different concerns emerge as people grow and develop is obvious. Young adulthood is referred to as a time of making commitments (Lerner & Hultsch, 1983). Individuals have to make choices regarding marriage, occupation and lifestyle. Major decisions are typically related not only to themselves but also their relations with others. Indeed, interpersonal relationships are a very significant aspect of young adulthood. In order to have a clear understanding of young adults' needs and their relations with others, three areas need to be reviewed: (1) the area of young adulthood with a focus on developmental concerns; (2) the area of interpersonal relationships with reference to the family and counseling literature, systems approach and the Circumplex Model; and (3) the area of stress management with emphasis on conflict resolution.

### Early Adult Development

One approach to the study of human development is to examine individuals in different periods of a life span. The terms "youth", "late adolescence" and "early adulthood" have been used to describe people in their late teens to late twenties. The pre-adult years, however, have been the focus of the field of human development since

the turn of this century (Lerner & Hultsch, 1983). Compared to such life periods as infancy, childhood and adolescence, adulthood has not received as much attention and emphasis until recently, despite the contribution of Erikson's theory which includes three adult stages (Newman & Newman, 1983). This occurred because many developmental theorists believed that human development stopped at adolescence (Newman & Newman, 1983). Even Freud seemed to think that development ended with the onset of adulthood, as he described only five psychosexual stages without including any adult stage in his theory. Contemporary researchers are now acknowledging that adulthood is marked not by stability but by a great deal of growth and change. Moreover, adulthood is a period in which certain significant decisions must be made and unique challenges are encountered. Early adulthood, in particular, is the focus of the present study. Biologically, people in their 20's are in the peak years of their lives. Socially and psychologically, they are in the process of establishing themselves in both their occupations and relationships (Levinson, 1986). Similar to any other life stages, early adulthood has its own tasks and concerns.

According to Erikson's epigenetic stage theory, each developmental stage has a psychosocial crisis (Erikson, 1963). The resolution of the crisis in one stage contributes to the psychological maturity of the person and is necessary for resolving another crisis in the next stage. Each crisis is phrased as a struggle between two conflicting characteristics. For the stage of early adulthood, the bipolar outcomes are intimacy and isolation. Intimacy refers to "the capacity to commit [oneself] to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments" (Erikson, 1963, p.263). Therefore, marriage and friendships are two common avenues through which the need for intimacy can be gratified. However, not all relationships lead to intimacy. Isolation, the psychosocial antithesis to intimacy, is

characterized by "a fear of remaining separate and 'unrecognized'" (Erikson, 1982, p.70). The lack of such important aspects of intimacy as mutuality, empathy and reciprocity can lead to isolation (Kahn, Zimmerman, Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1985; Turner & Helms, 1986). Through the crisis of intimacy versus isolation, love, the basic strength of young adulthood, matures (Erikson, 1978).

Havighurst (1972) asserts that early adulthood is a very major period of life. During these years, young adults assume important responsibilities and independently make decisions that have a major influence on the rest of their lives. Havighurst has identified eight developmental tasks of early adulthood. They include selecting a mate, learning to live with a marriage partner, starting a family, rearing children, managing a home, getting started in an occupation, taking on civic responsibility and finding a congenial social group. Five out of these eight developmental tasks are directly related to relationships. The role of interpersonal relationships in early adulthood is evident.

Levinson (1986) conceptualizes young adulthood as the novice phase of adult life and describes it as "the adult era of greatest energy and abundance and of greatest contradiction and stress" (p.5). A young adult typically becomes less dependent on the family of origin and becomes involved in making important choices concerning marriage, family, work and lifestyle (Turner & Helms, 1986). On one hand, early adulthood can provide rich satisfaction in relationships as well as occupational achievement. On the other hand, this can also be a time of heavy obligations and burdens with the demands of family, community and society (Levinson, 1986).

Gould (1972) considers young adulthood to be a critical period of development. This is the age period for building and maintaining independent life. Basically, young adults must learn to eliminate irrational ideas that are restricting to their lives. They establish independence away from home, embark on a career, expand social horizons

and develop personal convictions about life (Turner & Helms, 1986). In general, their tasks involve building up the basic ingredients of independent living and examining the illogical ideas about life.

Young adulthood can also be viewed as entailing several transformations. Keniston (1977) portrays youth as entering a new stage of life, a result of modern social structure. First, a young adult must learn to deal with the conflict between personal choices and the standards and expectations of society. Second, he or she experiences a deepening mutuality which is similar to Erikson's concept of intimacy. An individual emancipates himself or herself from being emotionally dependent upon the family and becomes capable of intimacy and mutuality with the opposite sex. Achieving mutuality requires the ability to acknowledge individuality of each person, which is the precondition for loving and connecting with others (Keniston, 1968). Third, one is able to conceptualize values, incorporating postconventional moral thought. Keniston (1977) suggests that formulating values, forming interpersonal relationships and determining long-term goals are among the concerns for people in this age period.

Weick (1983) suggests that human growth during adulthood is cyclical. In her growth-task model, Weick rejects the notion of sequential development. Yet, she accepts the growth tasks of adulthood to be revolving around such themes as the capacity for intimacy, the capacity to nurture, engagement in productive activity, establishment of balance between dependence and independence, and the capacity to transcend personal concerns. Young adults need to encounter these tasks and challenges which require redefinitions (Weick, 1983).

Empirical research does provide considerable support for the above-mentioned theories of young adult development. For example, the four men in the study of Levinson, et al., (1978) were remarkably different from one another. Findings from the

interviews indicated that four major tasks most prominent during early adulthood were: (1) forming a vision or ideal and giving it a place in the life structure, (2) forming mentor relationships, (3) forming an occupation, and (4) forming love relationships, marriage and family (Levinson et al., 1978). Kuh and Thomas (1983) identified the following four developmental themes in their study with 40 graduate students: (1) the redefinition of self, (2) purposeful independence, (3) exploration versus maintenance of a stable life pattern, and (4) the dream of the adult life pattern. Obviously, the themes found in these two studies were similar, though they might be conceptualized differently.

Not all studies have supported the task descriptions of young adulthood suggested by these theories, however. Using a self-report format and Havighurst's tasks as criteria, Roscoe and Peterson (1984) reported that college students were working primarily on tasks of adolescence and were involved much less on tasks of early adulthood. The subjects in their study were 485 undergraduate students in the 1982-1983 school year. Results indicated that the developmental tasks of early adulthood, as identified by Havighurst, did not represent their major concerns. Nevertheless, experience derived from social interactions appeared to be the key to adult status (Hardwick, 1984). In Hardwick's (1984) study, 60 college sophomores were included to investigate their concept of adulthood. Although the idea of personal identity formation was not essential to their concept of adulthood, their experience in interpersonal relationships significantly contributed to their sense of adulthood. Therefore, relationships seem to have an impact on young adults. Indeed, various conceptual frameworks (Richardson, 1981; Thomas & Kuh, 1982; Wortley & Amatea, 1982) have adopted family, interpersonal relationship or intimacy as important dimensions in understanding and counseling young adults. It is obvious that the quest

to form interpersonal relationships is a crucially significant component of young adulthood.

Interpersonal Relationships

People's lives are enveloped in networks of personal relationships in which joy and sorrow are founded. Two fundamental human needs, the need to feel close to others and the need to have impact on others, motivate people to get involved with one another (McAdams, 1985). Interpersonal relationships not only provide support and satisfaction to individuals as social beings but also are essential to personal identity development. Cultivating dyadic relationships is, in particular, a major concern of young adults whose quest for intimacy is manifested in their pursuit of close relationship and marriage.

In describing and analyzing interpersonal relationships, different theoretical paradigms have focused on different variables (see Table 1). These variables are related to the cohesion, adaptability and communication dimensions of the Circumplex Model (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983). Although this model was developed to provide the basic theoretical underpinnings for the study of marital and family systems, it is utilized in the present study to conceptualize the functioning of both marital relationships and roommate relationships. The cohesion dimension of the model provides significant relevance to both of these relationships.

According to the Circumplex Model, family cohesion is the degree of connectedness or separateness between family members (Anderson, 1986). Family cohesion is defined as "the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another" (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983, p.70). Variables measuring the cohesion dimension include emotional bonding, coalition, time, space, boundaries, decision-

Table 1

Theoretical Models Using Cohesion, Adaptability, and Communication (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983)

| | COHESION | ADAPTABILITY | COMMUNICATION | OTHERS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Benjamin (1974 & 1977) | Affiliation | Interdependence | | |
| Epstein, Bishop & Levin (1978) | Affective Involvement | Behavior Control<br>Problem-Solving<br>Roles | Communication<br>Affective<br>Responsiveness | |
| French &Guidera (1974) | | Capacity to change<br>Power | | Anxiety; Role as symptom carrier |
| Kantor & Lehr (1975) | Affect Dimension | Power dimension | | Meaning dimension |
| Leary (1957) and Constantine (1977) | Affection<br>Hostility | Dominance<br>Submission | | |
| Lewis et al. (1976) and Beavers (1977) | Closeness<br>Autonomy<br>Coalitions | Power Negotiation | Affect | Mythology |
| Parsons & Bales (1955) | Expressive Role | Instrumental Role | | |

making, friends, recreation and interests (see Table 2). Emotional bonding refers to the degree of closeness and support the members feel toward each other. Whether or not the members do things as a pair is an example of coalition. Spending time together voluntarily and sharing space together indicate the time and space variables. The preference to discuss and do things with just the members illustrates the boundaries. Members consulting each other on their decisions is an example of decision making. Recreation and interests refer to the sharing of similar hobbies. All these are significant to the measuring of cohesion.

Levels of cohesion range from disengaged (very low) to separated (low to moderate) to connected (moderate to high) to enmeshed (very high). Although the degree of connectedness reflects emotional involvement and commitment of the individuals to a certain extent, it does not imply that an extremely high level of cohesion would make for optimal functioning of a relationship. The Circumplex Model hypothesizes that the central levels of cohesion (separated and connected) are desirable. It is because at these central levels individuals experience and balance being independent from and connected to one another (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983). Neither of the extreme levels of cohesion (disengaged or enmeshed) characterizes optimally functioning relationships. Extreme levels of cohesion lead to either detachment or overidentification (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983). Therefore, a moderate level of cohesion is considered to be healthy in this model.

The cohesion dimension of the model is selected as one of the constructs of the present study. A major reason for choosing the cohesion dimension as a construct of interest concerns the importance and centrality of "cohesion" in relationship assessment. Minuchin (1974) and Minuchin and Fishman (1981) have described the extreme levels of cohesion as disengagement and enmeshment. Bowen (1961) has used such terms as

Table 2

Family Cohesion Dimensions (Olson & McCubbin, 1982)

| | DISENGAGED (Very Low) | SEPARATED (Low to Moderate) | CONNECTED (Moderate to High) | ENMESHED (Very High) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional Bonding | Very Low | Low to Moderate | Moderate to High | Very High |
| Independence | High independence of family members. | Moderate independence of family members. | Moderate dependence of family members. | High dependence of family members. |
| Family Boundaries | Open external boundaries. Closed internal boundaries. Rigid generational boundaries. | Semi-open external and internal boundaries. Clear generational boundaries. | Semi-open external boundaries. Open internal boundaries. Clear generational boundaries. | Closed external boundaries. Blurred internal boundaries Blurred generational boundaries |
| Coalitions | Weak coalitions. | Marital coalition clear. | Marital coalition strong. | Parent-child coalitions, usually a family scapegoat. |
| Time | Time apart from family maximized (physically and/or emotionally). | Time alone and together is important. | Time together is important. Time alone permitted for approved reasons. | Time together maximized. Little time alone permitted. |
| Space | Separate space both physically and emotionally is maximized. | Private space maintained; some family space. | Family space maximized. Private space maximized. | Little or no private space at home. |
| Friends | Mainly individual friends seen alone. Few family friends. | Some individual friends. Some family friends. | Some individual friends. Scheduled activities with couple and family friends. | Limited individual friends. Mainly couple or family friends seen together. |
| Decision Making | Primarily individual decisions. | Most decisions are individually based, able to make joint decisions on family issues. | Individual decisions are shared. Most decisions made with family in mind. | All decisions, both personal and relationship must be made by family. |
| Interests and Recreation | Primarily individual activities done without family. Family not involved. | Some spontaneous family activities. Individual activities supported. | Some scheduled family activities. Family involved in individual interests. | Most or all activities and interests must be shared with family. |

emotional divorce or emotional fusion to describe cohesion level. Moderate levels of cohesion have been reflected by such notions as differentiated self (Bowen, 1961; 1978), mutuality (Wynn, Ryckoff, Day and Hirsch, 1958) and interdependence (Olson, 1972; Olson and McCubbin, 1982; Stephen and Markman, 1983).

Interpersonal relationships have been analyzed in terms of factors like similarity (Duck, 1973; Hinde,1979), complementarity (Hinde, 1979; Murstein, 1976), reciprocity (Hinde, 1979), value consensus (Eisert, 1983; Murstein, 1976), self-disclosure (Gilbert, 1976; Hinde, 1979; Levinger, 1977), control (Hinde, 1979) and commitment (Hinde, 1979; Roseblatt, 1977). These factors contribute to the temporal qualities of a relationship with varying weights and account for the development as well as the maintenance of a relationship (Duck, 1985). However, in studies using these factors, the focus has been on the individuals involved rather than the relationship itself. The individuals' needs, values and personality attributes have been emphasized as the determinants of their relationship. Situation variables such as proximity serve as another approach to the understanding of relationship formation. Studying the qualities of the relationship itself would, therefore, constitute an important dimension.

Stress Management

Stress and coping are concepts that have attracted a great deal of interest and scientific endeavor. Nobody lives a stress-free life. This is why coping or stress management has become a major concern for researchers, as well as health professionals. Attempts have been made to understand the coping process and variables influencing stress management.

Parkes (1986) investigated the role of individual differences, environmental factors, and situational characteristics in dealing with stressful episodes. The results of

this study indicated that all three variables were significant predictors of the coping scores of 135 first-year female student nurses. Other researchers focused on such variables as dispositional difference and perception of the situation. For instance, Scheier, Weintraub and Carver (1986) found optimists, as opposed to pessimists, are more problem-focused in coping and sought social support and emphasized positive aspects of the stressful situation. However, when the event was perceived or interpreted as uncontrollable, the optimists were inclined to acceptance or resignation. On the other hand, the pessimists tended to deny and distance themselves from the stressful episode. Strategies in coping may be different due to a combination of individual and situational factors.

One important source of stress is interpersonal conflict. Indeed, conflict is a pervasive and inevitable aspect of life. Though a negative connotation is often attached to it, conflict per se is not necessarily bad and actually has many positive functions (Deutsch, 1971). The way or process of handling conflicts has tremendous effects on a relationship in that constructive or destructive outcomes can be resulted (Deutsch, 1973).

Whether a conflict leads to constructive or destructive consequences depends upon several factors. Deutsch (1971) identified seven variables affecting the course of conflict: (1) the characteristics of the parties in conflict, (2) their prior relationship to one another, (3) the nature of the issue giving rise to the conflict, (4) the social environment within which the conflict occurs, (5) the interested audiences to the conflict, (6) the strategy and tactics employed by the parties in the conflict, and (7) the consequences of the conflict to each of the participants and to other interested parties. All these are essential to the understanding of conflict-resolution behavior.

Styles of resolving conflicts have been studied with various approaches. Terhune (1970) described styles of conflict resolution in relation to personality attributes. He reported that conflict tends to be escalated when the individuals are concrete, intolerant of ambiguity, dogmatic, suspicious, and strong in the needs for aggression, autonomy and dominance. On the contrary, conflict tends to be mitigated when the individuals are abstract, tolerant of ambiguity, nondogmatic, trusting and strong in the needs for abasement, deference and affiliation.

Stagner (1971) took an alternative view in analyzing styles of conflict resolution. Stagner focused on the perceptual variable as a decisive factor. He considers perceptual style as a personal disposition. Depending on the perceptual styles of the person, conflicts can be intensified or mitigated. Previous unpleasant experience with certain groups of people, stereotyping and prejudice can all lead to perceptual distortion. Perception can magnify the weight of certain inputs, diminish the importance of other inputs and distort the quality as well as magnitude of the inputs. Therefore, perceptual distortions help account for individual differences in styles of resolving conflicts.

Situation is another crucial determinant of conflict-resolution behavior. Each situation has certain rules, explicit and implicit. These situational rules together with the individual's interpretation of them determine his or her behavioral strategy (Magnusson & Endler, 1977). According to Endler and Edwards (1982), the perception-interpretation process of the situation is influenced by both person factors and situation factors, rather than personal dispositions only. Thus, the person and the situation interact. This person-situation interaction process is continuous and dynamic (Magnusson,1982). In addition to the focus on person factors, the situation must, therefore, be considered to understand styles of conflict resolution.

Two studies which examined styles of conflict resolution deserve some attention. Sternberg and Soriano (1984) addressed the question of whether or not individuals exhibit consistent cross-situational styles of conflict resolution. Although the results indicated consistency in the individuals' modes of conflict resolution, both within and across content domains, the study had two significant limitations (Sternberg & Dobson, 1987). The conflict situations presented to the subjects were hypothetical stories. They were not actual conflicts which occurred in real life. Moreover, the persons involved in the conflicts of the hypothetical stories were not the subjects themselves. These limitations make generalization to real situations involving the subjects difficult. In response to this, Sternberg and Dobson (1987) investigated consistency of conflict-resolution styles in actual conflicts that happened in the subjects' lives. Strong consistencies in styles of conflict resolutions were observed within individuals across various types of relationships. Statistically significant correlations between real and ideal methods of conflict resolution were found. However, correlations of individual's styles within relationships were lacking because subjects were asked to describe only one conflict for each of the interpersonal relationships mentioned. Therefore, whether a person is consistent in the use of particular conflict-resolution styles, within the same relationship, across situations, remains unknown.

## Conclusion

The literature review highlights the developmental concerns of early adulthood, the cohesion dimension of a relationship and conflict-resolution behavior. The need for intimacy impels young adults to cultivate close, personal relationships with other people. A moderate level of cohesion is important for relationships to be satisfying and to function optimally. Commitment often accompanies the fulfillment of this human

need. Moreover, interpersonal conflicts seem to be indispensable in every intimate relationship. They may lead to growth or even more intimacy but may negatively effect relationships as well. The way conflicts are handled may escalate or mitigate the tension. Therefore, resolving conflicts becomes essential to the destiny of a relationship as well as to the quest for intimacy.

# CHAPTER 3

## METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the consistency of conflict-resolution behavior. The study attempts to identify whether or not style of conflict resolution is related to the cohesion level of relationships. The resolution of conflicts relating to three different issues, or content domains (money, personal habits, household chores), is explored. Two types of relationships, in particular, are examined. One type is marital relationship, while the other is the same sex, roommate relationship. These two types of relationships are very different from each other, but are comparable in terms of the inevitability of getting the parties into conflicts. Both the actual and ideal scores of cohesion were computed and their relationship with style of conflict resolution explored.

### Research Hypotheses and Questions

The central research question is related to the consistency of conflict-resolution styles. Based on previous findings, two hypotheses are formulated:

1. There is no difference in the ratings of conflict-resolution styles across the three content domains.
2. Certain styles of conflict resolution are preferred over the others.

In examining how people resolve conflicts, several other research questions are in need of attention. The questions are as follows:

1. Is there any difference in the ratings of conflict-resolution styles between the married group and the roommate group?
2. Does the level of actual cohesion influence the style of conflict resolution?
3. Does the level of ideal cohesion influence the style of conflict resolution?

## Sample

The sample of this study consisted of university students, college students and nursing students of a hospital program. The educational institutions attended by the students are located in the city of Edmonton, Alberta. The subjects in the sample were recruited through advertisements and announcements made in university classes. The age range of the subjects is 20-27 years old. Of the 76 subjects, 47 of them were either legally married or living with a romantic partner while the remaining 29 were living with a same sex roommate. All subjects were females volunteering for their participation.

## Instrumentation

### Relationship Inventory

The self-report inventory used to measure the cohesion level of the subjects' marital/roommate relationships was based upon the Circumplex Model (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983) of family functioning and was prepared for the present study. This inventory was derived from the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales or FACES II (Olson, Bell & Portner, 1978) and FACES III (Olson, Portner & Lavee, 1985) which assess variables specifically related to the cohesion and adaptability dimensions of the model (see Appendix A). Since the cohesion dimension is more related to the need for intimacy by young adults and therefore the construct of interest for the present study, the items assessing cohesion were modified so that they would be applicable to both marital and roommate relationships while those assessing adaptability were dropped to form the revised scale. Furthermore, 10 items on the Relationship World Index or RWI-2 (Stephen & Markman, 1983) which measures symbolic interdependence of dyads in intimate relationships (see Appendix B) were modified. In addition, six other items assessing cohesion in various aspects of life were formulated

for the present study so that more components of cohesion can be measured (Anderson, 1986). In total, the Relationship Inventory consists of 40 items (see Appendix C) related to emotional bonding, coalitions, space, time, decision-making, friends, boundaries, recreation and interest. Since items from different scales are combined to form the Relationship Inventory for this exploratory study, caution in usage and interpretation is advised.

Reliability and validity data of FACES II and FACES III are provided in the manuals. A test-retest reliability score of .83 for cohesion is reported for FACES II. The reliabilities, using Cronbach's Alpha, of the cohesion scale are .91 and .77 for FACES II and FACES III respectively. According to the results of a factor analysis, cohesion items are primarily loaded on one factor. For the Relationship Inventory used in the present study, an internal consistency check yielded Cronbach's Alpha values of .94 and .93 for actual and ideal cohesion respectively. Regarding validity, the current inventory was prepared through the modification of appropriate items from tests measuring cohesion or symbolic interdependence. The items covered a fairly comprehensive range and major aspects of the cohesion domain to be measured. Thus, considerable content validity and face validity were suggested.

The Relationship Inventory allows for a double administration to obtain ideal as well as actual scores for cohesion. Both the actual and ideal scores are utilized to clarify any relationship between the level of cohesion and the style of conflict resolution. The items are comprised of statements requiring responses on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from "almost never" to "almost always" referring to the degree of relationship cohesion perceived by the subjects. Good scores are not indicated by extreme high or low scores but are represented by medium scores which signify medium level of

cohesion. Two scores for cohesion, the ideal and the actual, can be calculated and then grouped into three levels for analysis.

Conflict Resolution Inventory

The inventory used to assess how people resolve interpersonal conflicts was based on the study by Sternberg and Dobson (1987); it consists of three parts. In Part A, the subjects were asked to describe three conflicts they had with their marital partner/roommate. They were asked to recall one conflict in each of the following three content domains: money, personal habits, and household chores. In Part B, subjects were asked to describe the methods they used to resolve those conflicts. In Part C, seven methods of conflict resolution were listed and described. Subjects were asked to provide ratings regarding the extent to which each of seven methods was applicable to their resolution of each of the three conflicts. The seven methods were physical action, economic action, wait and see, accept the situation, step down, third-party intervention, and undermine esteem. This list of conflict-resolution styles was used in Sternberg and Soriano's study (1984) and Sternberg and Dobson's study (1987). They were found to cover fairly well the styles people use in solving interpersonal conflicts (Sternberg & Dobson, 1987).

Part C of this self-report inventory consists of ratings regarding the extent of the applicability of the seven methods to resolution of conflicts by the subjects. Subjects were asked to rate each of the methods for each conflict on a seven-point Likert type scale ranging from "not at all like I did" to "mostly like I did", referring to the degree of applicability of the listed methods to subjects' actual modes of resolution. A copy of the Conflict Resolution Inventory is provided in Appendix D.

## Other Data Collection

### Personal Information

Subjects were requested to complete a personal data questionnaire. The information requested was related to the individual's age and sex, as well as the nature of the relationship. Data collected from this form were utilized in relevant hypothesis testing. A copy of the personal data sheet is provided in Appendix E.

## Procedure

Subjects were recruited on a voluntary basis. A plea for recruitment was made in different classes offered by the Departments of Recreation Administration and Educational Psychology, and the Faculty of Business Administration of the University of Alberta. Notices were posted up in various places on campus and the dormitories of the university. Criteria for participation were clearly stated (see Appendix F). Data were collected in the period from October to November, 1987. Subjects who volunteered to participate in the study were tested either individually or in small groups. The purpose of the study was explained to the volunteers; and they could withdraw from the study at anytime. They were asked to complete the following three questionnaires: the Relationship Inventory, the Conflict Resolution Inventory, and the Personal Information Sheet. All questionnaires were administered in paper-and-pencil format.

## Delimitations and Limitations

Although this study is based upon the Circumplex Model of family functioning, only the cohesion dimension of the model was selected to be a construct of interest. It was assumed that cohesion, rather than adaptability, is more closely related to the need

for intimacy. Moreover, person variables such as sex and personality were not considered. The focus was on cohesion level, a characteristic of the relationship.

The limitations of the study are related to the selection of the sample. The subjects were female students in post-secondary educational institutions. Therefore, they were not representative of the total young adult population. Furthermore, subjects were recruited on a voluntary basis and therefore might not be representative of the available total student population. Caution should be taken because of the non-random sampling and unequal sized groups. Consequently, the generalizability of the results would be limited to female students in post-secondary educational institutions in the city of Edmonton.

## Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with six undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Alberta. They filled out all three questionnaires individually. As a result of their comments and questions, modifications were made to the written instructions of the inventories in order to achieve greater clarity.

## Data Processing and Analysis

All collected data were processed and computer analyzed at the Division of Educational Research Services (DERS), University of Alberta. Data were analyzed using various statistical procedures to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions.

A three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether or not there was a difference in the mean ratings of conflict-resolution styles across the three content domains (money, personal habits and household chores) and between the

two relationship groups (the married and the roommate groups). The effects of relationship group, content domain and style of conflict resolution were explored. Post-hoc tests were used when significant F values were found.

In exploring the relationship between level of cohesion and style of conflict resolution, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used. Subjects were categorized into 3 groups of low, medium and high levels, according to their cohesion scores. The effect of measured cohesion on style of conflict resolution was examined.

Whether or not differences in measured cohesion, age, length of time knowing each other and length of time living together existed between the married and roommate groups were investigated with t-test and chi-square procedures. The effects of relationship group and length of time living together on measured cohesion were examined by means of a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

# CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analyses are organized according to the research hypotheses and questions. First, a general description of inventory results is presented. Then, the analysis of data focusing on supporting or rejecting the research hypotheses is reported and discussed. Research questions which emerged from the literature review are addressed, along with an interpretation of relevant data. Finally, other research findings are included for discussion.

### Inventory Results

#### Relationship Inventory

The Relationship Inventory allows for a double administration in order to obtain two cohesion scores, actual and ideal, for every subject. Of the 76 subjects, six did not answer all the items completely. In analyzing the data, a rating of '3' was assigned to each unanswered item to minimize the bias caused by the unanswered items. The basic statistics for actual and ideal cohesion scores are provided in Table 3.

A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, treating the relationship group (married, roommate) and cohesion (actual, ideal) as two main effects. Two statistically significant main effects were found: relationship group ($F=50.02$, $p<.01$), and cohesion ($F=53.88$, $p<.01$). In other words, the married group had higher actual and ideal cohesion scores than did the roommate group. Also, the ideal cohesion scores were significantly higher than the actual cohesion scores for both groups.

Table 3. Basic Statistics for Actual and Ideal Cohesion Scores.

| Relationship Group | | Cohesion | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Actual | | Ideal | |
| | | M | SD | M | SD |
| Married | (47) | 81.49 | 18.31 | 93.94 | 11.87 |
| Roommate | (29) | 53.90 | 23.59 | 68.10 | 18.04 |
| Combined | (76) | 70.96 | 24.40 | 84.08 | 19.17 |

Conflict Resolution Inventory

The results from the administration of the Conflict Resolution Inventory are provided in Table 4. Both the mean and the standard deviation are reported for each content domain and style of conflict resolution.

## Data Analysis and Discussion

Effects of Relationship Group, Content Domain and Style of Conflict Resolution on Ratings of Conflict-Resolution Styles

A three-way analysis of variance was conducted, treating the following as main effects:

(a) the relationship group (married, roommate) as an effect between subjects,

(b) the content domain (money, personal habits, household chores) as an effect within subjects, and

(c) the style of conflict resolution (wait and see, accept the situation, step down, third-party intervention, physical action, economic action, undermine esteem) as an effect within subjects.

There were two statistically significant main effects: relationship group ($F=4.43$, $p<.05$), and style of conflict resolution ($F=138.69$, $p<.005$). The married group and

Table 4. Summary Statistics for the Conflict Resolution Inventory.

| Group | Style | Content Domain: Money M | Money SD | Personal Habits M | Personal Habits SD | Household Chores M | Household Chores SD | 3 Domains Combined M | 3 Domains Combined SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Married (n=47) | ST1 | 3.87 | 2.07 | 4.15 | 2.13 | 3.87 | 2.09 | 3.97 | 1.55 |
| | ST2 | 4.70 | 1.91 | 4.34 | 2.17 | 3.91 | 2.21 | 4.32 | 1.59 |
| | ST3 | 3.62 | 2.00 | 3.64 | 2.08 | 3.34 | 2.16 | 3.53 | 1.28 |
| | ST4 | 1.19 | 0.58 | 1.45 | 1.35 | 1.09 | 0.35 | 1.24 | 0.50 |
| | ST5 | 1.30 | 1.02 | 1.43 | 1.25 | 1.57 | 1.53 | 1.43 | 1.07 |
| | ST6 | 2.43 | 2.05 | 1.09 | 0.35 | 1.13 | 0.49 | 1.55 | 0.79 |
| | ST7 | 1.28 | 0.74 | 1.64 | 1.44 | 1.51 | 1.23 | 1.48 | 0.90 |
| Roommate (n=29) | ST1 | 5.21 | 1.88 | 4.83 | 2.19 | 5.10 | 1.82 | 5.05 | 1.43 |
| | ST2 | 4.79 | 2.02 | 5.14 | 1.98 | 4.59 | 2.01 | 4.84 | 1.44 |
| | ST3 | 3.62 | 2.26 | 4.52 | 2.08 | 3.93 | 2.22 | 4.02 | 1.84 |
| | ST4 | 1.31 | 0.81 | 1.21 | 0.68 | 1.38 | 0.82 | 1.30 | 0.66 |
| | ST5 | 1.31 | 0.85 | 1.62 | 1.63 | 1.66 | 1.74 | 1.53 | 1.15 |
| | ST6 | 1.62 | 1.47 | 1.24 | 0.95 | 1.17 | 0.47 | 1.35 | 0.66 |
| | ST7 | 1.34 | 0.86 | 1.41 | 0.95 | 1.45 | 1.09 | 1.40 | 0.93 |
| Married & Roommate Combined (n=76) | ST1 | 4.38 | 2.09 | 4.41 | 2.16 | 4.34 | 2.07 | 4.38 | 2.11 |
| | ST2 | 4.74 | 1.94 | 4.65 | 2.12 | 4.17 | 2.15 | 4.52 | 2.09 |
| | ST3 | 3.62 | 2.08 | 3.97 | 2.11 | 3.57 | 2.19 | 3.72 | 2.14 |
| | ST4 | 1.24 | 0.67 | 1.36 | 1.14 | 1.20 | 0.59 | 1.26 | 0.84 |
| | ST5 | 1.30 | 0.95 | 1.50 | 1.40 | 1.61 | 1.60 | 1.47 | 1.35 |
| | ST6 | 2.12 | 1.88 | 1.15 | 0.65 | 1.15 | 0.48 | 1.47 | 1.27 |
| | ST7 | 1.30 | 0.78 | 1.55 | 1.27 | 1.49 | 1.17 | 1.45 | 1.10 |

the roommate group were, therefore, significantly different from each other in their overall ratings of conflict-resolution styles. The main effect of style of conflict resolution indicated that certain styles were more frequently used than others. The effect of the content domain was not statistically significant. In other words, the subject of the conflict (money, personal habits, household chores) did not affect the style which people actually used to resolve their conflicts. In addition to two significant main effects, two statistically significant interactions were observed: relationship group by style of conflict resolution (A x C), $F=2.81$, $p<.05$, and content domain by style of conflict resolution (B x C), $F=2.60$, $p<.01$ (see Table 5).

The result shows that the married and roommate groups were different in their overall ratings of the styles of resolving conflict; conflict resolution was rated as somewhat less characteristic of the actual conflict-resolution methods for the married group than for the roommate group. Compared to the roommate group, the married group identified seven styles of conflict resolution which were less representative of the actual ways in which they resolved conflicts. Although the difference between the means of the two groups was statistically significant, the difference was not very meaningful because the difference in mean ratings of all styles was less than .30 on a 7-point scale.

The main effect of style of conflict resolution was due to certain styles being rated as more frequently used than others. According to the mean ratings, the styles listed in order are shown in Table 6.

Table 5. Summary of Analysis of Variance: Effects of Relationship Group, Content Domain and Style on Ratings of Conflict Resolution Styles.

| Source | SS | df | MS | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship Group (A) | 29.9 | 1 | 29.89 | 4.43 | 0.039 |
| within A | 499.8 | 74 | 6.75 | | |
| Content Domain (B) | 6.4 | 2 | 3.21 | 2.21 | 0.114 |
| Group x Domain (AB) | 5.5 | 2. | 2.77 | 1.90 | 0.153 |
| within AB | 215.5 | 148 | 1.46 | | |
| Style (C) | 3147.2 | 6 | 524.54 | 138.69 | 0.001 |
| Group x Style (AC) | 63.7 | 6 | 10.62 | 2.81 | 0.011 |
| within AC | 1679.2 | 444 | 3.78 | | |
| Domain x Style (BC) | 56.8 | 12 | 4.73 | 2.60 | 0.002 |
| Group x Domain x Style | 24.8 | 12 | 2.07 | 1.14 | 0.327 |
| within ABC | 1615.4 | 888 | 1.82 | | |

Table 6. Mean Ratings of Conflict-Resolution Styles in Rank Order.

| Style | Mean |
|---|---|
| 1. Accept the situation (Style 2) | 4.52 |
| 2. Wait and see (Style 1) | 4.38 |
| 3. Step down (Style 3) | 3.72 |
| 4. Physical action (Style 5) | 1.47 |
| Economic action (Style 6) | 1.47 |
| 5. Undermine esteem (Style 7) | 1.45 |
| 6. Third-party intervention (Style 4) | 1.26 |

The Tukey's HSD (honestly significant difference) test (Kirk, 1982) provides a post-hoc test for determining differences between pairs of means while maintaining the overall $\alpha$-level for the group of tests at the prescribed level (i.e., .05). The Tukey-Kramer procedure (Kirk, 1982), a modification of Tukey's HSD test for unequal size groups, is appropriate for the present study. This test provides a "q" statistic (studentized range statistic), which is a modification of a t statistic. Different pairs of means were tested for significance, using tables provided by Kirk (1982), in order to evaluate which styles were preferred over the others. Results (see Table 7) indicate that the styles "wait and see" (ST1) and "accept the situation" (ST2) were more frequently used than all the other styles. The style "step down" (ST3) was used more often than the styles "third-party intervention" (ST4), "physical action" (ST5), "economic action" (ST6), and "undermine esteem" (ST7). Among the styles ST4, ST5, ST6, and ST7, no significant difference was obtained.

Table 7. Comparisons Between Levels of Style.

| Levels of style | q |
|---|---|
| ST1 vs ST2 | -1.09 |
| ST1 vs ST3 | 5.11* |
| ST1 vs ST4 | 24.18* |
| ST1 vs ST5 | 22.58* |
| ST1 vs ST6 | 22.58* |
| ST1 vs ST7 | 22.75* |
| ST2 vs ST3 | 6.20* |
| ST2 vs ST4 | 25.27* |
| ST2 vs ST5 | 23.67* |
| ST2 vs ST6 | 23.67* |
| ST2 vs ST7 | 23.84* |
| ST3 vs ST4 | 19.07* |
| ST3 vs ST5 | 17.47* |
| ST3 vs ST6 | 17.47* |
| ST3 vs ST7 | 17.64* |
| ST4 vs ST5 | -1.60 |
| ST4 vs ST6 | -1.60 |
| ST4 vs ST7 | -1.43 |
| ST5 vs ST6 | 0 |
| ST5 vs ST7 | 0.17 |
| ST6 vs ST7 | 0.17 |

*$p<.01$

According to these findings, ST1 and ST2 were perceived as most characteristic of what the subjects actually did in resolving conflicts. Another pattern worth noting is that the styles. ST1, ST2 and ST3 were significantly different from the other four styles ($p<.01$). Therefore, people preferred the styles "wait and see", "accept the situation", and "step down" to the other styles. Overall, the styles "accept the situation" and "wait and see" were most frequently used to resolve interpersonal conflicts. However, two interaction effects relating to the style of conflict resolution were observed (see Table 5). Thus, the relationship group factor and content domain factor should be taken into consideration in order to clarify the effect of style of conflict resolution.

The interaction between relationship group and style of conflict resolution indicates that certain styles were more preferred by the roommate group than by the married group. Interaction can be explained as a significant departure of the lines from parallelism (Kirk, 1982; Myers, 1966). In other words, the simple main effect of relationship group is not constant at all seven styles of conflict resolution (see Figure 1 and Table 8). In order to clarify the interaction effect, t-tests were used. Since the tests of simple main effect for each of the seven styles requires seven tests, the appropriate level of significance is $\alpha=.014$ (this is obtained from combining the $\alpha$'s for A and AC, and dividing by the number of tests: (.05+.05)/7), (Kirk, 1982). Results indicate only one significant difference between the two groups. The style "wait and see" was the only style in which the married and roommate groups differed ($t=-3.05$, $p<.005$). The roommates preferred using the style "wait and see" more often than the married subjects. They were not different in terms of their preference for using other styles. Therefore, women in same sex roommate relationships may tend to resolve conflicts with the style "wait and see" more frequently than women in marital relationships.

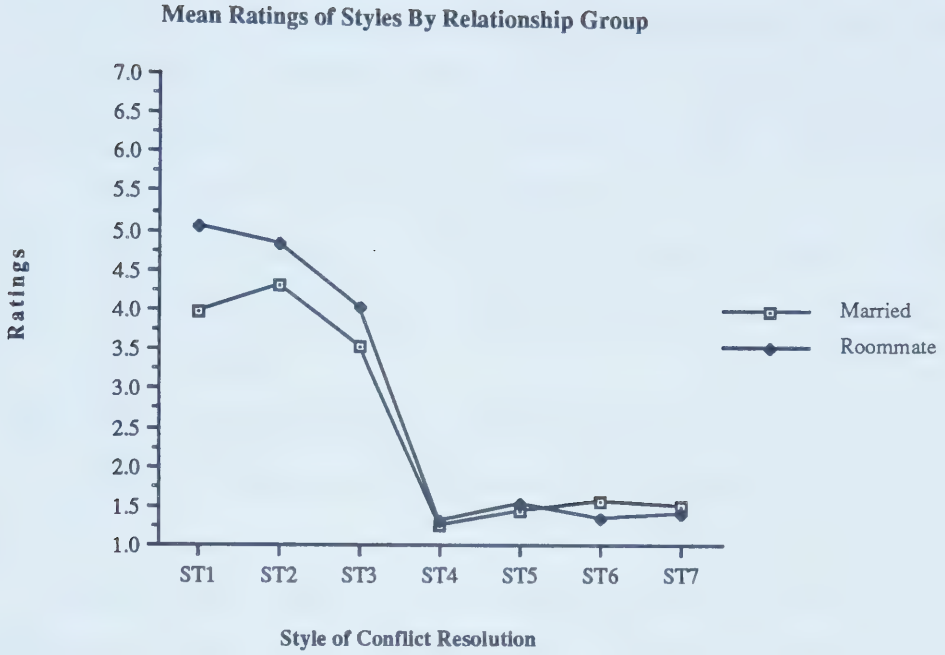


Figure 1

Table 8. Mean Ratings of Styles By Relationship Group.

| | Style | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship Group | ST1 | ST2 | ST3 | ST4 | ST5 | ST6 | ST7 |
| Married | 3.97 | 4.32 | 3.53 | 1.24 | 1.43 | 1.55 | 1.48 |
| Roommate | 5.05 | 4.84 | 4.02 | 1.30 | 1.53 | 1.35 | 1.40 |

Another way of analyzing the interaction is to examine whether or not significant differences exist among the styles within each of the two relationship groups. The Tukey-Kramer procedure (Kirk, 1982) was used. Statistically significant results are reported as follows:

(a) For both the married and roommate groups, the means for the styles "wait and see" (ST1), "accept the situation" (ST2) and "step down" (ST3) were significantly higher than those for the other four styles (the values of q statistic range from 11.96 to 18.79, $p<.01$).

(b) For the married group, the mean for the style "accept the situation" (ST2) was significantly higher than the mean for the style "step down" (ST3), ($q=4.81$, $p<.05$).

(c) For the roommate group, the mean for the style "wait and see" (ST1) was significantly higher than the mean for the style "step down" (ST3), ($q=4.91$, $p<.05$).

According to these results, there is a preference for using the styles "wait and see", "accept the situation" and "step down" rather than the other styles by both groups. Among these three styles, the style "wait and see" was used more often than the style "step down" by the roommates; the style "accept the situation" was more frequently used than the style "step down" by the married subjects.

The interaction between content domain and style of conflict resolution indicates that certain styles were preferred in some content domains. The simple main effect of style of conflict resolution is not constant across the three content domains (see Figure 2 and Table 9). In order to clarify the interaction effect, the Tukey-Kramer procedure (Kirk, 1982) was used. The ratings across content domains were compared for each of the seven styles. No statistically significant differences were obtained. Therefore, for each of the seven styles, the subject of the conflict did not influence the frequency of the styles being used or people's preference for using the styles. This is consistent with the finding that the conflict issue itself is not found to be statistically significant.

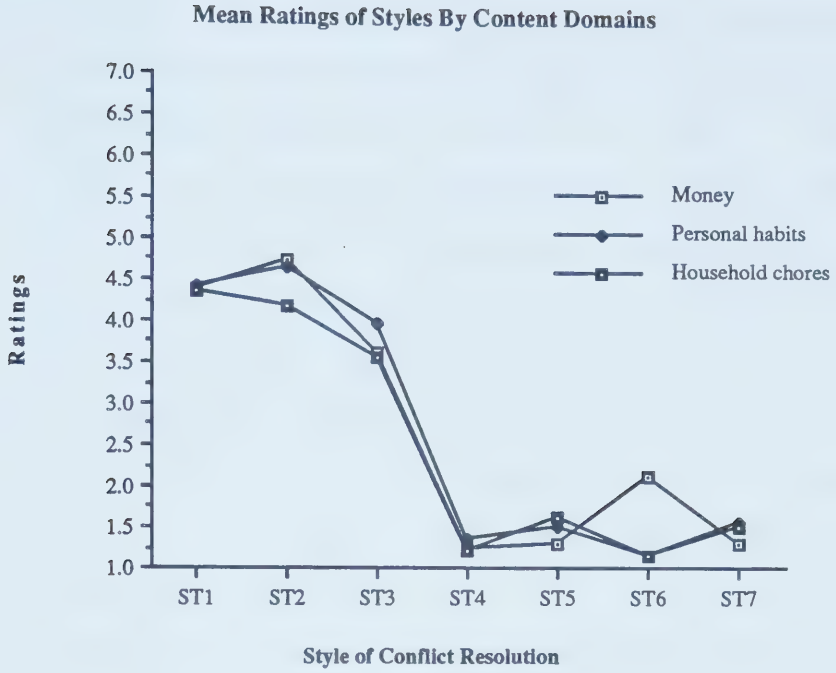


Figure 2

Table 9. Mean Ratings of Styles By Content Domains.

| | Style | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content Domain | ST1 | ST2 | ST3 | ST4 | ST5 | ST6 | ST7 |
| Money | 4.38 | 4.74 | 3.62 | 1.24 | 1.30 | 2.12 | 1.30 |
| Personal habits | 4.41 | 4.65 | 3.97 | 1.36 | 1.50 | 1.15 | 1.55 |
| Household chores | 4.34 | 4.17 | 3.57 | 1.20 | 1.61 | 1.15 | 1.49 |

Another way of analyzing the interaction is to examine whether or not the ratings of the styles are significantly different within each of the content domains. Results from the Tukey-Kramer procedure indicate the following significant differences:

(a) In resolving money conflicts, the styles "wait and see" (ST1) and "accept the situation" (ST2) were preferred over the styles "third-party intervention" (ST4), "physical action" (ST5), "economic action" (ST6) and "undermine esteem" (ST7) (the values of q statistic range from 7.24 to 11.20, $p<.01$). The style "step down" (ST3) was preferred over three styles, "third-party intervention" (ST4), "physical action" (ST5) and "undermine esteem" (ST7) (the values of q statistic range from 7.41 to 7.62, $p<.01$).

(b) In handling conflicts relating to personal habits, the styles "wait and see" (ST1), "accept the situation" (ST2) and "step down" (ST3) were more frequently used than the remaining four styles (the values of q statistic range from 7.75 to 11.20, $p<.01$).

(c) In dealing with conflicts concerning household chores, the styles "wait and see" (ST1), "accept the situation" (ST2) and "step down" (ST3) were used more often than the remaining four styles (the values of q statistic range from 6.27 to 10.23, $p<.01$).

One obvious pattern which emerged from the results was that the three styles "wait and see", "accept the situation" and "step down" were the most preferred styles for all three content domains. Although a statistically significant difference in using the styles "step down" and "economic action" for money conflict was not observed, the trend indicated that the style "step down" was more preferred than the style "economic action". This is consistent with the findings that there is no main effect for the content domain while the main effect of style of conflict resolution is statistically significant ($p<.005$).

A three-way repeated measure design ANOVA was conducted. This is equivalent to Kirk's (1982) split-plot factorial design with two within-subjects factors

(i.e., content domain and style of conflict resolution) and one between-subjects factor (relationship group). In response to the research hypotheses and questions, conclusions drawn from the ANOVA findings are as follows:

(a) Hypothesis 1: *There is no difference in the ratings of conflict-resolution styles across the three content domains.*

Hypothesis 1 is not rejected because there is no statistically significant main effect of content domain. In other words, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of conflict-resolution styles across the three content domains. The subject of the conflict does not affect the styles which people use to resolve conflict.

(b) Hypothesis 2: *Certain styles of conflict resolution are preferred over the others.*

Hypothesis 2 is not rejected because main effect of style is statistically significant. Certain styles of conflict resolution are preferred over the others, depending on the relationship group and content domain. Both married and roommate groups prefer the styles "wait and see", "accept the situation", and "step down" over the other four styles. In particular, the married subjects use the style "accept the situation" more often than the style "step down" while the roommates use the style "wait and see" more frequently than the style " step down". Overall, the three styles "wait and see", "accept the situation" and "step down" are also used more frequently than the remaining four styles across all three content domains. The former three styles are the more preferred methods in resolving conflicts concerning money, personal habits or household chores.

(c) Question 1: *Is there any difference in the ratings of conflict-resolution styles between the married group and the roommate group?*

The married and roommate groups differ from each other in the overall ratings of conflict-resolution styles. The difference in mean ratings is very small, however. In fact, the two groups differ only in terms of their ratings on the style "wait and see". Roommates prefer the style "wait and see" more than the married subjects do.

Relationship Between Level of Measured Cohesion and Style of Conflict Resolution

One question which emerged from the literature review concerned whether or not the measured cohesion level of relationships affects the style of conflict resolution used by the subjects. The existence of a relationship between the variables, cohesion and style of conflict resolution, was determined by a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). All subjects were grouped into 3 levels of cohesion (low, medium, and high) according to their cohesion scores (see Tables 10 and 11). A one-way MANOVA was conducted for each of actual and ideal cohesion, treating the level of cohesion (low, medium, high) as a between-subjects variable and the seven styles of conflict resolution as seven dependent variables. No statistically significant effect was observed for either actual or ideal cohesion. Therefore, there is no relationship between measured cohesion and style of conflict resolution the subjects used. Although the medium level of cohesion is theoretically better than the other two levels, the medium level does not differ from the other levels in terms of the style of resolving conflicts. The results do not even suggest that level of cohesion is related to style of conflict resolution. Therefore, neither the level of actual cohesion nor the level of ideal cohesion influences the style of conflict resolution.

Table 10. Level of Actual Cohesion Scores.

| | Actual Cohesion | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low | Medium | High |
| Score | 6-64 | 65-83 | 84-112 |
| No. of people | 25 | 25 | 26 |

Table 11. Level of Ideal Cohesion Scores.

| | Ideal Cohesion | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low | Medium | High |
| Scores | 36-78 | 79-96 | 97-113 |
| No. of people | 25 | 26 | 25 |

Comparison Between the Married and Roommate Groups

A. Age

A t-test was used to explore whether the married and roommate groups differed in age. Although a statistically significant mean difference in ages ($t=2.61$, $p<.05$) was found, the mean difference was only 1.28 years. The mean ages were 24.20 years for the married subjects and 22.92 years for the roommates. On the average, the married group was about one year older than the roommate group. Although this difference is statistically significant, the difference is too small to be considered meaningful in this context.

B. Length of Time Knowing the Partner

On the personal data sheet, the subjects were asked to indicate how long they had known their partner. A chi-square test of independence procedure was used to explore whether or not the married and roommate groups differed from each other regarding the number of years they had known their partner. No statistically significant difference was obtained.

C. Length of Time Living Together

A chi-square test of independence procedure was used to investigate whether the two groups differed in the length of time they have been living with their partner. A statistically significant difference ($\chi^2$=21.22, p<.001) was observed between the two groups. About one-third (34%) of the married group have been living with their partner for 1 to 2 years and slightly less than one-fourth (23.4%) of the married group have been living with their partner for more than 3 years. On the other hand, close to half (48.3%) of the roommate group have been living with their partner for only 1 to 3 months or almost three quarters (72.4%) of this group have been living with their partner for less than one year. The difference between the two groups is shown in Table 12. This difference may have influence on aspects of the present study. For instance, the length of time living together may affect how conflicts are perceived and handled. It may also have an impact on both the actual and ideal cohesion. In addition, the influence of time living together on the two types of relationships may not be the same. Therefore, it is necessary to identify whether or not the length of time living together and the relationship group factor are related to the measured cohesion levels.

Table 12. Comparison of Proportion of Married and Roommate Groups by Number of Years Living Together.

| | Length of time living together | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | < 1 yr. | 1-2 yrs. | 2-3 yrs. | > 3 yrs. |
| Married | 25.5% | 34.0% | 17.0% | 23.4% |
| Roommate | 72.4% | 10.3% | 0% | 17.2% |

D. Measured Cohesion

A t-test was used to analyze differences in measured cohesion between the married and roommate groups. The married group obtained significantly higher mean cohesion scores than the roommate group. The mean scores of actual cohesion in their current relationships were 81.49 for the married group and 53.90 for the roommate group; this difference was statistically significant ($t=5.71$, $p<.001$). The mean scores of ideal cohesion were 93.94 for the married group and 68.10 for the roommate group; this difference was also statistically significant ($t=6.85$, $p<.001$). Apparently, the married subjects have a greater cohesion and desire for greater levels of cohesion than do the roommates. These results were not surprising due to the nature of the relationship where commitment is a part of the stated contract.

Effects of Relationship Group and Length of Time Living Together on Measured Cohesion

The findings that the married subjects have been living with their partner for a longer period of time than the roommate group and that they have higher cohesion levels lead to the speculation of whether or not the three variables, length of time living

together, relationship group and cohesion level, are related. It seems reasonable to expect a higher cohesion level when the length of time living together increases.

In order to clarify the relationship among the three variables, two two-way ANOVA's were conducted, treating

(a) the relationship group (married, roommate) as a between-subjects variable,

(b) the length of time living together (less than 1 year, more than 1 year) as a between-subjects variable, and

(c) the cohesion score as a dependent variable.

For both actual and ideal cohesion (see Tables 13 and 14), a statistically significant main effect was observed for the relationship group ($F=22.20$, $p<.001$ for actual cohesion; $F=39.85$, $p<.001$ for ideal cohesion). Therefore, it appears that the type of relationship, rather than the length of time living together, effects the actual as well as the ideal cohesion of relationships. The results of the analyses indicate that the married group had significantly higher mean cohesion scores than the roommate group. Thus, married subjects have a more cohesive relationship with their partner and a desire for a higher level of cohesion than do the roommates.

Table 13. Summary of Analysis of Variance: Effects of Relationship Group and Length of Time Living Together on Actual Cohesion.

| Source | SS | df | MS | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship Group | 8950.0 | 1 | 8950.01 | 22.20 | 0.000 |
| Living Time | 399.4 | 1 | 399.40 | 0.99 | 0.323 |
| Group x Living Time | 1586.0 | 1 | 1586.02 | 3.93 | 0.051 |

Table 14. Summary of Analysis of Variance: Effects of Relationship Group and Length of Time Living Together on Ideal Cohesion.

| Source | SS | df | MS | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relationship Group | 8502.6 | 1 | 8502.59 | 39.85 | 0.000 |
| Living Time | 116.4 | 1 | 116.40 | 0.55 | 0.463 |
| Group x Living Time | 124.1 | 1 | 124.13 | 0.58 | 0.448 |

Other Findings

Thinking of Breaking Up and Immediate Plan After Breaking Up

On the personal data sheet, the subjects were asked to state whether or not they had ever thought of breaking up their relationship. The results show that half (50.7%) of the subjects have never thought of breaking up their relationship with either their spouse or roommate and only about one-third (34.7%) of the total sample have thought of breaking up once in a while; this indicates a high commitment to the relationship. Regarding having an immediate plan after breaking up, the married and roommate groups were not significantly different from each other. However, the trend was that the majority (84.4%) of the married group and only about half (56.3%) of the roommate group have no plan. This may partly account for the higher cohesion levels of the married group.

## Summary

The results of data analyses are reported and interpreted in this chapter. Both hypotheses are not rejected and the three research questions are addressed. In addition, comparisons between the married group and the roommate group are made and discussed.

# CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study examined some of the ways with which people use to resolve interpersonal conflicts and attempted to explore whether or not the cohesion level of a relationship influences conflict-resolution behavior. The first hypothesis suggests that people use similar methods to resolve different conflicts. The second one states that some modes of conflict resolution are preferred over others. The results of the study confirm both of the two hypotheses. Findings also suggest a slight difference in style of conflict resolution between the two groups of subjects in the study. With regard to the relationship between cohesion level and methods of resolving conflict, no significant result is obtained. A summary of the findings is in order.

Regarding the consistency of conflict-resolution behavior, the results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in the subjects' ratings of conflict-resolution styles across the three conflict issues. In other words, the results suggested that whether the conflict was related to money, personal habits or household chores, the methods which people used to resolve conflicts remained the same. People would not handle different types of conflicts in a different manner.

Among the seven styles of conflict resolution, some styles were preferred over the others. Results suggested that the styles "wait and see", "accept the situation" and "step down" were chosen more frequently than the other styles by both the married and roommate subjects. As well, these three styles were the most frequently used methods regardless of the subject of conflicts (money, personal habits or household chores). These findings reflect the popularity of these three methods which people in different interpersonal relationships use to deal with various conflicts.

The two groups of people, which were classified by their marital or roommate relationships, did not differ a great deal in their methods of resolving conflict. Although one analysis showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups in resolving conflicts, further analyses revealed that the difference was only due to their differing preferences for the style "wait and see". The roommates used the style "wait and see" more often than did the married subjects.

Research which was undertaken with the Circumplex Model of family dynamics (Olson, Russell & Sprenkle, 1983) suggested that cohesion is one of the important variables in understanding and treating marital and family problems. Theoretically, a moderate amount of cohesion in a relationship is considered desirable and is viewed as healthier than extremely high or low cohesion. Whether or not the moderate level of cohesion would differentiate itself from the two extreme levels in terms of conflict-resolution styles was explored. Findings suggested no relationship between style of conflict resolution and measured cohesion, either actual or ideal. In other words, the degree of closeness in a relationship as well as the ideal level of emotional bonding did not seem to affect how the individuals handled their conflicts.

Other comparisons were made between the married and roommate groups. A statistically significant difference between the two groups was found in both actual and ideal cohesion. Compared to the roommate group, the married group perceived their relationship with their partner to be much closer and desired for a greater degree of bonding with their partner. This finding indicated the difference in the nature of the two relationships and the marital relationship seemed to provide more cohesion and intimacy.

Another statistically significant difference between the married and roommate subjects was the length of time they had been living with their partner. About three-

quarters (74.4%) of the married subjects had been living with their partner for more than a year while about three-quarters (72.4%) of the roommates had been living with their partner for less than a year. This difference, together with the different nature of relationship, were examined in order to determine whether or not they had an impact on the level of measured cohesion. Analysis of the data did not report a relationship between the length of time the subjects had been living with their partner and the degree of bonding in their relationship. Rather, it was the type of relationship that influenced both the existing and ideal closeness of a relationship. People in marital relationship both had and hoped for greater attachment, support, and sharing with their partner than did those in roommate relationship.

One characteristic of the sample in the present study was that the majority of the subjects had seldom, if ever, thought of breaking up their relationship with their partner. This appeared to indicate one aspect of their commitment to their current relationship.

Implications for Future Research

Based on Sternberg and Dobson's (1987) study, the present research examined seven styles of conflict resolution. Since results indicated that four of the styles ("third-party intervention", "physical action", "economic action", "undermine esteem") were very rarely used to handle conflicts, the other three styles ("wait and see", "accept the situation", "step down") should be the focus of future investigations. It would also be worth exploring the reasons for choosing such strategies. Is the preference for these methods due to their effectiveness, or due to a lack of assertion on the part of the individuals involved? It seems that all three popular methods are quite passive in the sense that a person does not immediately initiate any action to change the situation or

make demands on the other party. Effects of assertiveness training on the choice of conflict-resolution style would be worth investigating.

Future research on resolving interpersonal conflicts would provide helpful insight if both parties in a relationship are involved in the study. Th handling of a conflict situation by one party affects the other party's choice of strategies and also the development of the conflict. Whether or not a conflict is resolved depends upon the styles of conflict resolution as well as the interaction of the styles chosen by the parties. It is important to capture the dynamic aspect of human interaction.

In order to have a more thorough and in-depth study, researching a combination of approaches may prove beneficial. In addition to the survey and quantitative approaches, the use of interviews could possibly introduce a different dimension to future research efforts. Asking people to define their own methods of resolving conflicts would minimize the degree of irrelevance of conflict-resolution styles suggested by the researcher. Moreover, interviews allow for interaction between the subjects and the researcher. Vague descriptions and thoughts can be clarified and the reasons for a person handling a conflict situation in a particular way can be explored.

Since the resolution of a conflict is usually achieved with more than one particular method, looking at the pattern of styles used becomes meaningful and essential. Successful conflict resolution with constructive outcomes could be due to a particular combination/pattern of styles used rather than the use of any one style. This would have significant implications regarding future research. The focus would be on a combination/pattern of styles instead of the individual styles. In order to examine a pattern of styles used to resolve conflicts, a multivariate statistical analysis would be required.

The consistency of conflict-resolution behavior also has a great deal of importance. The finding that the subject of conflict does not affect the way conflict is handled reflects a phenomenon that people use similar methods to resolve very different conflicts. Therefore, once people acquire certain strategies and are convinced of their effectiveness, they would generalize the strategies to a variety of situations. This would be a very crucial piece of information for helping people deal with conflicts or teaching children and youth to resolve interpersonal conflicts. Whether or not conflict-resolution styles are appropriate or effective depends, to a certain extent, on the conflict issue, circumstances, timing, the nature of the relationship, emotional state and personality of the individuals. To generalize the application of certain "effective" strategies to other situations without considering the factors mentioned might, therefore, endanger the existing relationship. Conflicts can push people away from each other or pull people into more intimate encounters, depending on the way conflicts are handled. What is needed is more than learning different conflict-resolution styles, but also the ability to discern and evaluate the whole situation.

Further research on conflict-resolution behavior is very important because of its wide clinical applications. It would be meaningful to explore whether or not sex differences exist. Comparing the way intact families handle arguments with the way individuals in broken homes handle arguments would be worthwhile. This may lead to a greater understanding of, or even more effective treatment for, marital and family problems. Looking at conflict-resolution behavior of different kinds of interpersonal relationships, such as parent-child, teacher-student, peers, and in-laws relationships, would have significant educational as well as clinical applications. The knowledge of conflict resolution in various relationships certainly aids in improving the quality of the

relationships. Educating and counseling individuals in dealing with interpersonal conflicts require continual research efforts in this area.

Although the present study did not report a relationship between cohesion and style of conflict resolution, a longitudinal approach may help discover the possible relationship. The degree of closeness in a relationship changes as the relationship continues to develop. If the bonding in a relationship is assessed in different periods of time and analyzed in relation to the modes used to resolve conflicts, different findings may be resulted. The current study treated cohesion as a between-subjects factor. A longitudinal study, which would regard cohesion as a within-subject factor, may contribute to further exploration of the relationship between the degree of closeness in a relationship and the strategies for resolving conflicts.

Commitment seems to be another interesting construct worth some attention in future research. Whether or not people had thought of breaking up their relationship, an aspect of commitment, was superficial explored in the present study. How commitment in a relationship influences the selection of strategies for handling conflicts remains to be investigated.

Relating to people is an art. It involves creativity and flexibility. Although scientific research cannot accurately predict all human behavior, it does shed light on understanding many phenomena. Research on resolving interpersonal conflict is an example. It may fail to predict how a person will handle certain conflict situation. However, research definitely adds to knowledge which would help equip people to properly deal with conflicts. Interpersonal conflict is inevitable and pervasive in life. Research effort in this area would be valuable and meaningful to everyone.

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# APPENDIX A

## FACES II & FACES III

## FACES II ITEMS

by

David H. Olson, Joyce Portner, and Richard Bell

1. Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times.
2. In our family, it is easy for everyone to express his/her opinion.
3. It is easier to discuss problems with people outside the family than with other family members.
4. Each family member has input in major family decisions.
5. Our family gathers together in the same room.
6. Children have a say in their discipline.
7. Our family does things together.
8. Family members discuss problems and feel good about the solutions.
9. In our family, everyone goes his/her own way.
10. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.
11. Family members know each other's close friends.
12. It is hard to know what the rules are in our family.
13. Family members consult other family members on their decisions.
14. Family members say what they want.
15. We have difficulty thinking of things to do as a family.
16. In solving problems, the children's suggestions are followed.
17. Family members feel very close to each other.
18. Discipline is fair in our family.
19. Family members feel very close to people outside the family than to other family members.
20. Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems.

21. Family members go along with what the family decides to do.
22. In our family, everyone shares responsibilities.
23. Family members like to spend their free time with each other.
24. It is difficult to get a rule changed in our family.
25. Family members avoid each other at home.
26. When problems arise, we compromise.
27. We approve of each other's friends.
28. Family members are afraid to say what is on their minds.
29. Family members pair up rather than do things as a total family.
30. Family members share interests and hobbies with each other.

## FACES II: ANSWER SHEET

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete Part I completely, and then complete Part II. Please answer all questions, using the following scale.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALMOST NEVER | ONCE IN A WHILE | SOMETIMES | FREQUENTLY | ALMOST ALWAYS |

PART I:

How Would You Describe Your Family Now?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. ____ | 2. ____ | | |
| 3. ____ | 4. ____ | | |
| 5. ____ | 6. ____ | | |
| 7. ____ | 8. ____ | | |
| 9. ____ | 10. ____ | | |
| 11. ____ | 12. ____ | | |
| 13. ____ | 14. ____ | | |
| 15. ____ | 16. ____ | | |
| 17. ____ | 18. ____ | | |
| 19. ____ | 20. ____ | | |
| 21. ____ | 22. ____ | | |
| 23. ____ | 24. ____ | | |
| 25. ____ | 26. ____ | | |
| 27. ____ | 28. ____ | | |
| 29. ____ | | | |
| 30. ____ | | | |

PART II:

How Would You Like Your Family To Be?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 31. ____ | 32. ____ | | |
| 33. ____ | 34. ____ | | |
| 35. ____ | 36. ____ | | |
| 37. ____ | 38. ____ | | |
| 39. ____ | 40. ____ | | |
| 41. ____ | 42. ____ | | |
| 43. ____ | 44. ____ | | |
| 45. ____ | 46. ____ | | |
| 47. ____ | 48. ____ | | |
| 49. ____ | 50. ____ | | |
| 51. ____ | 52. ____ | | |
| 53. ____ | 54. ____ | | |
| 55. ____ | 56. ____ | | |
| 57. ____ | 58. ____ | | |
| 59. ____ | | | |
| 60. ____ | | | |

## FACES III: Couple Version

David H. Olson, Joyce Portner, and Yoav Lavee

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALMOST NEVER | ONCE IN A WHILE | SOMETIMES | FREQUENTLY | ALMOST ALWAYS |

DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY NOW:

____ 1. We ask each other for help.

____ 2. When problems arise, we compromise.

____ 3. We approve of each other's friends.

____ 4. We are flexible in how we handle our differences.

____ 5. We like to do things with each other.

____ 6. Different persons act as leaders in our marriage.

____ 7. We feel closer to each other than to people outside our family.

____ 8. We change our way of handling tasks.

____ 9. We like to spend free time with each other.

____ 10. We try new ways of dealing with problems.

____ 11. We feel very close to each other.

____ 12. We jointly make decisions in our marriage.

____ 13. We share hobbies and interests together.

____ 14. Rules change in our marriage.

____ 15. We can easily think of things to do together as a couple.

____ 16. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.

____ 17. We consult each other on our decisions.

____ 18. It is hard to identify who the leader is in our marriage.

____ 19. Togetherness is a top priority.

____ 20. It is hard to tell who does which household chores.

## FACES III: Couple Ideal Version

David H. Olson, Joyce Portner, and Yoav Lavee

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALMOST NEVER | ONCE IN A WHILE | SOMETIMES | FREQUENTLY | ALMOST ALWAYS |

IDEALLY, how would you like YOUR FAMILY TO BE:

____ 21. We would ask each other for help.

____ 22. When problems arise, I wish we would compromise.

____ 23. We would approve of each other's friends.

____ 24. We would be flexible in how we handle our differences.

____ 25. We would like to do things with each other.

____ 26. Different persons would act as leaders in our marriage.

____ 27. We would feel closer to each other than to people outside our family.

____ 28. We would change our way of handling tasks.

____ 29. We would like to spend free time with each other.

____ 30. We would try new ways of dealing with problems.

____ 31. We would feel very close to each other.

____ 32. We would jointly make decisions in our marriage.

____ 33. We would share hobbies and interests together.

____ 34. Rules would change in our marriage.

____ 35. We could easily think of things to do together as a couple.

____ 36. We would shift household responsibilities from person to person.

____ 37. We would consult each other on our decisions.

____ 38. We would know who the leader is in our marriage.

____ 39. Togetherness would be top priority.

____ 40. We could tell who does which household chores.

# APPENDIX B

## RELATIONSHIP WORLD INDEX (RWI-2)

## RELATIONSHIP WORLD INDEX (RWI-2)

1. Relationships should be oriented toward fun.
2. Relationships provide variety in life; they spice things up.
3. One should feel free to participate in several relationships at once.
4. Relationships should provide pleasure and enjoyment.
5. Sex is not important to a relationship.
6. A relationship should not be possessive or exclusive.
7. People should feel free to be themselves in a relationship.
8. A relationship should provide tenderness and support.
9. A relationship has the power to completely change a person's life.
10. A genuine love relationship only comes once in a lifetime.
11. Being in a relationship can provide purpose for one's life.
12. Being in a relationship means giving all of oneself to one's partner.
13. In this quickly changing world it is important that a person have a strong sense of self and a commitment to personal growth that is not lost when he or she becomes a member of a relationship.
14. If people can accept that they will be in several relationships during their lifetime, they may learn to approach relationships with a healthier outlook.
15. The sooner people realize that there is no such thing as one true love the better off they'll be.
16. A relationship should maintain a balanced mixture of sexual attraction, friendship, understanding, tenderness, and concern for the other.
17. A relationship should be smooth and constant -- not all ups and downs.
18. In a relationship the other person should be accepted as a person in his or her own right.

19. In a relationship one should be more committed to the relationship itself than to the other person.
20. One has to make great efforts to get the most from a relationship.
21. A relationship requires a concentrated effort to give to the other without losing oneself in the process.
22. One should not try to control one's partner in a relationship.
23. A relationship should be more under the control of one's will and less under the control of one's emotions.
24. Fighting can actually lead to a better relationship.
25. There is no way to know for sure what a relationship partner is feeling unless he or she tells you or you ask.
26. People who have the most freedom in their relationships are those who allow their partner freedom and privacy.
27. In a relationship partners should never take each other for granted.
28. It doesn't matter in a relationship if partners differ in the amount they like to be touched.
29. A relationship is a place to escape chaos and strife in life.
30. Jealousy does not enter into a good relationship.
31. It is important that relationship members get to know each other's families.
32. Finding things to do together is never a problem in a relationship.
33. Being in a relationship is insurance against loneliness.
34. Money matters are never a problem in a relationship.
35. A relationship partner should be loyal, devoted, loving, and exclusive.
36. In a relationship it is very important that partners share the same ideas about religion.

37. Nothing should be left unsaid in a relationship.
38. A relationship works best when both partners have similar hobbies and interests.
39. One of the nice things about a relationship is getting to know the partner's friends.
40. Relationships can be a problem when both partners wish to pursue their own careers.
41. Differences in relationship partners' backgrounds do not matter in building a relationship.
42. A relationship partner's family should not be allowed to influence the relationship.
43. A good relationship is one in which both members enjoy sharing their deepest feelings about all aspects of life.
44. Relationship members should spend as much time together as they do alone.
45. It doesn't matter if my partner in a relationship does less for me than I do for him or her.
46. One partner's caring can hold a sort of restrictive power over the other.
47. Both partners should contribute equally to the relationship.
48. There should be a balance of reward in a relationship.
49. It is important to consider the long-range costs and rewards in a relationship.
50. If one partner in a relationship gives a little, the other should have to as well.
51. If one relationship member puts a lot into the relationship, the other will probably do as well.
52. A good relationship partner should be the most rewarding partner possible.
53. Being in a relationship can change the way one understands the world.
54. Relationships seem to develop their own hidden rules about what things will mean for the partners.

55. Relationship partners seem to develop understandings about things without ever talking about them.
56. In a good relationship the partners manage to stay just a little mysterious to each other.
57. Sometimes it is necessary to bend the truth a little bit in order to maintain a good relationship.
58. A puzzling thing about relationships is that it is easy to lose some interest in the relationship after it gets going.
59. In a good relationship the partners share private jokes about people and life in general.
60. Partners don't have to talk about their relationship in order for it to be a good one.

# APPENDIX C

# RELATIONSHIP INVENTORY

## RELATIONSHIP INVENTORY

You are going to describe one **present** relationship you have. This relationship must be between you and a person whom you live with. Thus, it can be a **present** relationship with your spouse, romantic partner, or roommate.

Please place a check [ √ ] by the relationship you are going to describe in the following:

(1) ____ the relationship with my spouse

(2) ____ the relationship with my romantic partner who lives with me

(3) ____ the relationship with my same sex roommate

(4) ____ the relationship with my opposite sex roommate

Scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Almost never** | **Once in a while** | **Sometimes** | **Frequently** | **Almost always** |

Use the above scale (1 to 5) to describe your **present** relationship in the following items:

( ) 1. It is difficult for us to find time to be together.
( ) 2. We are very involved in each other's "business".
( ) 3. Individual differences are emphasized in our relationship.
( ) 4. We eat more than one meal together each day.
( ) 5. Our relationship has the power to completely change our lives.
( ) 6. We are on our own individually when there is a problem to solve.

( ) 7. Our relationship provides purpose for our lives.
( ) 8. We are devoted, loving and exclusive to each other.
( ) 9. Nothing is left unsaid in our relationship.
( ) 10. We share our deepest feelings about all aspects of life.
( ) 11. In our relationship, the caring of one party holds a sort of restrictive power over the other.
( ) 12. We emphasize freedom and privacy in our relationship.

( ) 13. We put a lot into the relationship, making great efforts to get the most from it.
( ) 14. In our relationship, there is nothing mysterious to each other.
( ) 15. We share private jokes about people and life in general.
( ) 16. We have a difficult time reaching agreements.
( ) 17. We are supportive of each other during difficult times.
( ) 18. It is easier to discuss problems with my partner than with other people.

( ) 19. Each of us spends time together in the same room.
( ) 20. We do things together.
( ) 21. Each of us goes his/her own way.
( ) 22. We know each other's friends.
( ) 23. We feel closer to other people than to each other.
( ) 24. We go along with what we decide to do.

( ) 25. We avoid each other at home.
( ) 26. We go shopping together.
( ) 27. We share the same ideas almost about everything.
( ) 28. We have very different life goals and values.
( ) 29. We share each other's laughter and sorrow.
( ) 30. We cover up each other's mistakes in front of other people.

(- ) 31. We like to be treated as two individuals.
( ) 32. We ask each other for help.
( ) 33. We do things individually rather than together as a pair.
( ) 34. We approve of each other's friends.
( ) 35. We like to spend our free time with each other.
( ) 36. We feel very close to each other.

( ) 37. We share hobbies and interests together.
( ) 38. We consult each other on our decisions.
( ) 39. We have difficulty thinking of things to do as a pair.
( ) 40. Togetherness is our top priority.

## RELATIONSHIP INVENTORY

Now you are going to describe an **ideal** relationship you want to have with the same person you mentioned in the previous questionnaire.

Therefore, you are going to describe your **ideal** relationship with your:

(1) ____ spouse

(2) ____ romantic partner who lives with you

(3) ____ same sex roommate

(4) ____ opposite sex roommate

Scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Almost never** | **Once in a while** | **Sometimes** | **Frequently** | **Almost always** |

Use the above scale (1 to 5) to describe your **ideal** relationship.

**Ideally**, how would you like your relationship **to be:**

( ) 1. It would be difficult for us to find time to be together.
( ) 2. We would be very involved in each other's "business".
( ) 3. Individual differences would be emphasized in our relationship.
( ) 4. We would eat more than one meal together each day.
( ) 5. Our relationship would have the power to completely change our lives.
( ) 6. We would be on our own individually when there is a problem to solve.

( ) 7. Our relationship would provide purpose for our lives.
( ) 8. We would be devoted, loving and exclusive to each other.
( ) 9. Nothing would be left unsaid in our relationship.
( ) 10. We would share our deepest feelings about all aspects of life.
( ) 11. In our relationship, the caring of one party would hold a sort of restrictive power over the other.
( ) 12. We would emphasize freedom and privacy in our relationship.

( ) 13. We would put a lot into the relationship, making great efforts to get the most from it.
( ) 14. In our relationship, there would be nothing mysterious to each other.
( ) 15. We would share private jokes about people and life in general.

( ) 16. We would have a difficult time reaching agreements.
( ) 17. We would be supportive of each other during difficult times.
( ) 18. It would be easier to discuss problems with my partner than with other people.

( ) 19. Each of us would spend time together in the same room.
( ) 20. We would do things together.
( ) 21. Each of us would go his/her own way.
( ) 22. We would know each other's friends.
( ) 23. We would feel closer to other people than to each other.
( ) 24. We would go along with what we decide to do.

( ) 25. We would avoid each other at home.
( ) 26. We would go shopping together.
( ) 27. We would share the same ideas almost about everything.
( ) 28. We would have very different life goals and values.
( ) 29. We would share each other's laughter and sorrow.
( ) 30. We would cover up each other's mistakes in front of other people.

( ) 31. We would like to be treated as two individuals.
( ) 32. We would ask each other for help.
( ) 33. We would do things individually rather than together as a pair.
( ) 34. We would approve of each other's friends.
( ) 35. We would like to spend our free time with each other.
( ) 36. We would feel very close to each other.

( ) 37. We would share hobbies and interests together.
( ) 38. We would consult each other on our decisions.
( ) 39. We would have difficulty thinking of things to do as a pair.
( ) 40. Togetherness would be our top priority.

# APPENDIX D

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY

Part A

Please describe recent conflicts you have had with the same person you mentioned in the previous questionnaires.

1. a recent conflict related to money

2. a recent conflict related to personal habits

3. a recent conflict related to household chores

Part B

Please describe how you attempted to resolve those conflicts in Part A.

1. resolution of conflict #1

2. resolution of conflict #2

3. resolution of conflict #3

Part C

Please rate on a 1 (Not at all like I did) to 7 (Mostly like I did) scale the extent to which each of the following methods of conflict resolution characterizes the way you handled each of the conflicts you described. In some instances, you may find that a single method characterizes the way you handled the conflict extremely well, whereas the other methods do not characterize this way well at all; in other instances you may find that several methods describe the way you handled the conflict. In any event, make your ratings as appropriate as possible for the way (ways) in which you handled this particular conflict.

Turn to next page to make your ratings after you read the description of each method.

| | Method | Description |
|---|---|---|
| i) | Wait and see | I decided to wait things out and see if the situation improved. |
| ii) | Accept the situation | I accepted the situation as it was and attempted to make the best of it. |
| iii) | Step down | I attempted to diffuse the conflict by reducing or negating my demands on the other person. |
| iv) | Third-party intervention | I attempted to have a third party outside the conflict mediate the conflict and help arrive at a solution. |
| v) | Physical action | I attempted to get my way through physical force or coercion directed at the other person. |
| vi) | Economic action | I attempted to get my way through financial pressure directed at the other person. |
| vii) | Undermine esteem | I attempted to get my way by undermining the esteem in which the other person was held by people outside the conflict. |

1. Resolution of conflict #1

| | Not at all like I did | | | Medium | | | Mostly like I did |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| i) Wait and see | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| ii) Accept the situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| iii) Step down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| iv) Third-party intervention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| v) Physical action | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| vi) Economic action | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| vii) Undermine esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

2. Resolution of conflict #2

| | Not at all like I did | | | Medium | | | Mostly like I did |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| i) Wait and see | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| ii) Accept the situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| iii) Step down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| iv) Third-party intervention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| v) Physical action | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| vi) Economic action | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| vii) Undermine esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

3. Resolution of conflict #3

| | Not at all like I did | | | Medium | | | Mostly like I did |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| i) Wait and see | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| ii) Accept the situation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| iii) Step down | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| iv) Third-party intervention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| v) Physical action | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| vi) Economic action | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| vii) Undermine esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

# APPENDIX E

# PERSONAL INFORMATION SHEET

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please answer the following:

1. Have you filled out this set of questionnaires before? (1)Yes (2)No
2. Age: _____ years _____ month(s)
3. Sex: (1) Male _____ (2) Female _____
4. Currently, you are living with
   (1) a legally married spouse
   (2) a romantic partner of the same sex
   (3) a romantic partner of the opposite sex
   (4) one roommate of the same sex
   (5) more than one roommate of the same sex
   (6) one roommate of the opposite sex
   (7) more than one roommate of the opposite sex
   (8) others (please specify):
5. In relation to Question 4, how long have you known him/her?
   (1) 1-3 months (4) 1-2 years
   (2) 4-6 months (5) 2-3 years
   (3) 7-12 months (6) More than 3 years
6. How long have you been living with him/her?
   (1) 1-3 months (4) 1-2 years
   (2) 4-6 months (5) 2-3 years
   (3) 7-12 months (6) More than 3 years

7. Have you thought of breaking up the relationship?
   (1) Never
   (2) Once in a while
   (3) Sometimes
   (4) Frequently
   (5) Always
8. If you have thought of breaking up the relationship, do you have any immediate plan after breaking up? (1)Yes (2)No

# APPENDIX F

# CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION

Criteria for Participation

1. A female student; **and**
2. Between 20 and 27 years old; **and**
3. Currently living with
   (a) a legally married spouse, **or**
   (b) a romantic partner. **or**
   (c) a same sex roommate.

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